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Forum on Women in the North

The Ontario Status of Women Council will be holding a public forum at the Best Western Hotel in Dryden on September 15 and 16, 1984 to focus on the needs and concerns of women of northwestern Ontario.

The Council is working jointly with the Northwestern Ontario Women's Decade Council which has been representing northern women's concerns for a number of years.

Presentations are expected from women's centres, business and professional women's clubs, women's institutes and professional women's organizations on such issues as violence, economic development, employment, pensions and health. In addition, issues specifically related to farm women, native women, handicapped women, immigrant women, francophone women, homemakers, single parent mothers, older women and others will be addressed.

Attendance at the forum is free of charge and your participation is welcome! For further information call or write the Council office.

Meeting in Windsor

On May 17, 1984 Council held a public meeting in Windsor in order to focus on the needs and concerns of the women in southwestern Ontario.

Presentations were made by representatives from St. Clair College Women's Centre, the Windsor Women's Incentive Centre, La Chiffoniere (a group serving francophone women) and the London Battered Women's Advisory Clinic. In addition, Helen Channen, spoke on behalf of the concerns of women artists.

Sandra Manzig, Council member from Windsor, had brought to Council's attention the impending closure of the St. Clair College Women's Centre. This Centre has been in operation for the past eight years and now due to budget cuts, its Director's contract was being reduced to nine months, forcing it to close for the summer. This would have a detrimental impact on its operation for the balance of the year, since the summer was the time when fall and winter programs were planned.

The women at the College turned to Council for assistance and made a presentation at Council's public meeting in Windsor. The women's concerns were also heard by members of the College administration who were in the audience, and Council is happy to report that subsequent to this meeting, the College re-directed funds to the Centre which will hopefully enable it to stay open over the summer!

Windsor Meeting - continued

The Windsor Women's Incentive Centre asked Council for endorsement in their bid to obtain a grant from the federal government.

The Centre was founded in 1980 through a grant from the Secretary of State Women's Program and offers referral and information services, counselling services as well as conducts seminars and workshops.

The Centre was now hoping to take on career counselling for women as its core activity in order to assist women to enter non-traditional occupations and high technology jobs.

Council supported the Centre's request and urged the Minister of Employment and Immigration to provide the necessary funding. Unfortunately, we were not successful in persuading the federal government, but we wish to commend the Windsor Women's Incentive Centre for all their efforts in helping to improve the status of women in the Windsor area and we wish them every success in the future!

La Chiffoniere (a group serving francophone women) also appealed to Council for endorsement of their application to the federal government for funds for full-time staff.

This organization was established in 1982 through a grant from the Secretary of State to provide services to the French-speaking community in the Windsor area. (Essex County has the second largest French-speaking community in Canada outside Quebec, with approximately 80,000 people).

The group is currently being run by volunteers and part-time staff, and requires additional funds in order to pay badly needed full-time staff.

Sandra Manzig, Council's Windsor member will be working with the group, helping them in their search for funding.

The London Battered Women's Advocacy Clinic had appealed for Council's help through Annabelle Logan, Council member from London.

The Clinic had been established through a federal Department of Health and Welfare grant, which is due to run out in April 1985.

During its work, the Clinic has discovered a new profile of a battered woman which suggests that the stereotype of a battered woman coming from a low income group or being economically trapped is unfounded and incomplete. The women being seen at the Clinic are often highly educated, employed and financially independent.

Therefore, the Clinic is conducting research to rectify the image of the battered woman and doing community outreach to bring in the vast majority of battered women who do not seek help.

Council agreed that the Clinic is providing an essential service, and will be recommending that the government look at the Clinic as a model of support services, in addition to shelters, for women who are victims of assault.

Helen Channen, a woman artist, told Council that the government has legislated that one percent of the money spent on public buildings be set aside for Canadian works of art. She asked Council to recommend to the government that half of that percent be designated for women artists.

Council is very pleased with the interest and response from the community at its meeting in Windsor, and expects to hold similar regional meetings in other areas of the province, so that women from those areas can bring their special concerns directly to the Council.

Pornography and Prostitution

In April 1984, Council made a presentation to the Fraser Committee on pornography and prostitution.

Council recommended that Ontario in co-operation with the federal and municipal governments step up enforcement procedures as one of the means to eliminate pornography.

The Council agreed with prior screening of films and videotapes for pornographic content and urged the Ontario Government to establish clear and explicit guidelines for the Ontario Censor Board as to the type of pornographic material that is unacceptable.

In our brief, we also called on all three levels of government to increase their efforts to actively search out material that violates the obscenity legislation and to apprehend and prosecute those involved in the production, manufacture and distribution of obscene material.

We recommended changes to the Obscenity Section of the Criminal Code which would move the focus from explicit sex to sex in combination with violence.

We asked for changes to the Broadcast Act to prohibit abusive comment or abusive pictorial representation of either sex, and the inclusion of pay television within the CRTC sex-stereotyping guidelines.

Council urged the Ontario Government to change the Municipal Act in order to make it easier for municipalities to effectively regulate with respect to pornography.

In regard to prostitution, we recommended revisions to the Criminal Code which would have the effect of decriminalization for prostitutes and criminalization for customers, procurers and profiteers. Prostitution is seen by society and the law as a crime perpetrated by women, and in our brief, we argued that prostitution is a crime against women, and asked that the focus of prosecution be aimed at customers, pimps and procurers rather than at prostitutes whom the Council saw as the victims who have the least control over the situation.

Family Violence - The Third Option

In response to the recent cases reported in the news of battered women refusing to testify against their batterers, Council's committee on family violence presented the government with a report entitled Victim Assistance in Violent Families: The Battered Woman's Third Option.

This report re-states Council's previous recommendation for the establishment of a Family Education and Abuse Register (F.E.A.R.)

The Register would provide battered women with a third alternative that is not as severe as proceeding with a criminal charge but does deal with the problem of family violence. (The other two alternatives are - not to report the incident, or to call the police and proceed through the criminal justice system).

In this method (the third option), the beaten spouse would have the option of being registered as a beaten spouse and recording the name of the batterer. It would have the same effect as a peace bond, with failure to keep the peace resulting in the police laying criminal charges directly. Also, registration would result in mandatory referral to some form of treatment for the batterer such as psychiatric or psychological counselling or attendance at a program for men who batter.

Batterers could apply to be de-registered after being acquitted of the charge in court, successfully completing treatment, keeping the peace for seven years, or successfully suing the complainant for slander.

The Register could also be used to collect data to evaluate the effectiveness of various treatment programs and for other research purposes.

This proposal of Council was aimed to provide assistance to the victim as the first priority.

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Family Violence - Government Initiatives

The Ministry of Community and Social Services has introduced new initiatives to protect and assist battered women and their children.

Over \$10 million will be spent on services for battered women and their children this fiscal year, comprising a new funding of \$6.7 million, and an additional spending of \$3.5 million in 1984/85 on an ongoing basis.

These new initiatives include expansion of the network of transition houses, introduction of a network of "safe-homes" and additional non-residential emergency assistance and prevention services.

The Attorney General also recently announced the appointment of more than 50 specially designated Crown legal officers throughout Ontario to deal with domestic assault matters.

These officers will receive training in dealing with the special problems faced by victims of domestic violence through regional seminars to be conducted by the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ontario Women's Directorate, the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Justice Secretariat.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services will be working together with the Ontario Women's Directorate in the areas of prevention, education and public awareness of the problem of family violence.

Daycare

The Ministry of Community and Social Services has allocated a total of \$115 million in subsidies for day care in 1984/85. Included in this amount is additional spending for the Ministry of \$4.8 million for regular day care and \$1.2 million for special child care support.

The Provincial Standing Committee on Social Development is holding hearings on the Day Nurseries Act across Ontario during the month of September.

Departures...

Sally Barnes, Council president, resigned as of March 1, 1984. Her leadership, dedication and commitment to Council is sorely missed.

Other Council members who have resigned are John Adams of Toronto and Mary Lou Fox Radulovich of Manitoulin Island.

Gwen Bower Binns of Ottawa and Georgina Calder of Kenora have completed their terms with Council.

Council wishes to thank all the above members for their contributions over the years and wishes them well in their new endeavours.

Also, we would like to express special thanks and good wishes to Daphne Hay, our secretary over the past two years, who has returned to school to complete her education.

Election Pamphlet

The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women has published a SHOCKING PINK PAPER - a questionnaire on women's issues for political hopefuls!

Copies are available free of charge from our office.

Speakers

If your group is interested in having a Council member speak on a topic of interest to women, please call or write our office. Our staff will be happy to assist you with the arrangements.

Council Publications

Copies of Council's briefs and annual reports are available free of charge from the Council office.

For a list of Council publications, call or write our office.